Recommendations of Prabir Sengupta Committee on Tobacco Industry

*277. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR:
SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prabir Sengupta Committee, appointed to look into the tabacco industry affairs, has recommended deregulation of tobacco sector in phases and withdrawal of minimum guaranteed price after a three-year transition period;

(b) whether such a move will end up in virtual obolition of Tobacco Board;

(c) whether the tobacco farmer lobby in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka has alleged that the recommendations of the Committee are trader-friendly and anti-farmers; and

(d) if so, Government's response/reaction thereon?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY):

(a) The 'Peer Review' Report has recommended *inter alia* phased deregulation of production of Flue Cured Virginia tobacco without discontinuing the auction system.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Some representations have been received. The process of consulting the State Governments on the recommendations made in the report is underway.

Ban on selling of Gutka

*278. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that several States have imposed ban on sale of Gutka (packed chewing tobacco) due to its hazardous impact on health of its consumers;

(b) the names of States which have imposed ban on sale of Gutka;

(c) whether the efforts of the'se States are receiving support in any form from Government particularly with regard to the need of communicating to the masses of the lethal impact of chewing tobacco on human lives, in order to ensure success of the ban by dint of public involvement; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ):(a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Food (Health) Authorities of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Goa have prohibited the sale of Gutka in their respective States. The Food (Health) Authorities of States/UT Governments have independent powers under the Provisions of Section 7 (iv) of the PFA Act, 1954, to prohibit the sale of any article of food, for the time being, in the interest of Public Health.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is against the glorification of tobacco and tobacco products. The Government has introduced a Bill in the Parliament namely, the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution), Bill, 2001, to discourage the use of such products through measures such as, *inter alia,* prohibition of advertisement and banning sale to minors.

Monopoly of cable operators

*279. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that at present operators have a monopoly as far as their areas of operations are concerned and they are charging exorbitant rates from customers;

(b) whether Government propose to change this scenario;

(c) whether Government have allowed operators to increase the subscription even though there is no improvement in the quality of services provided by the cable operators;

(d) by when the Contitional Access System (CAS) would come in operation so that consumer could choose the channels of his choice; and

(e) whether Government propose to streamline the entire gamut of cable operations?